



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 22—28 APRIL 2018

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN !

**SUNDAY
22 APRIL**

Sunday of The Myrrh-bearers—Mark 15: 43-47—16:1-8

- 7.30— 11.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

***** SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES *****

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Immediately after Holy Communion until Church dismissal, in the building behind the Church, Religious Instruction lessons take place for our children. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years and are given in a relaxed, friendly environment. The understanding of our faith through the religious instruction lessons bring our children closer to God and the joy of peace of His Love.

**MONDAY
23 APRIL**

St George, Great-Martyr the
Trophy-bearer

- 7.00—9.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 10.00am
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.

**TUESDAY
24 APRIL**

- 7.00pm
Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord,
Coburg Youth Group will meet in Coburg Church Hall. The meeting
will begin with the Compline Service in English.

**WEDNESDAY
25 APRIL**

St Mark
the Apostle and Evangelist

- 7.00—9.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- 5.00pm
Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study

**SATURDAY
28 APRIL**

- 3.45pm
Service of Vespers

**SUNDAY
29 APRIL**

GOSPEL READING: John 5: 1-15
EPISTLE READING: Acts 9: 32-42



Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim
are available at the Church
every Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

**"God descends to the
humble as waters flow
down from the hills into
the valleys."**

~ St. Tikhon
of Voronezh

VOICE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

"...Their poor ointments, with which they meant to preserve from corruption Him who Himself keeps the heavens from decay, and with which they desired to anoint Him from whom the heavens take their fragrance! O most fragrant Lord, the only fragrance of the human being and human history; how wondrously didst Thou reward these devoted and faithful souls who did not forget Thee dead in Thy tomb! Thou didst make the Myrrh-Bearing Women the bearers of the tidings of Thy Resurrection and Thy glory! They did not anoint Thy dead body, but Thou didst anoint their living souls with the oil of gladness. The mourners of the dead became the swallows of a new spring."

- St. Nikolai Velimirovic - "Homily on the Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women"

ON THE SUNDAY OF THE HOLY MYRRHBEARERS

The Reading is from Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen. Christ is Risen!

The Gospel reading today should be familiar to you. The verses from chapter 16:1-8 comprise the reading before the closed doors of the Church on the night of Holy Pascha. According to most Biblical scholars St. Mark's Gospel originally ended here on a dramatic note. The Angel asks the Myrrh-bearing women to go tell the disciples (and Peter in particular) the news that they would meet the risen Lord in Galilee, but according to this Gospel the women do not do as commanded. Instead they flee from the tomb: "for trembling and astonishment had come upon them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." We must not be too hard on them. Put yourself in their place. How would we respond to such a startling scene? A redactor, or perhaps an editor added what we know are two alternative endings to complete the story. This doesn't bother us at all. We have known all along that the Gospels are the collected memories of the communities that gathered around the Apostles. They are the product of the Church rather than single individuals.

See also here a contrast. St. Mark reports that often Jesus asked those who are healed or who witness a miracle not to tell anyone and yet, usually, they end up doing the opposite. Now the angel requests that the news of the Resurrection be told and yet the women keep it secret. Surely they were overwhelmed. The trauma of the crucifixion of Jesus, the fear of retaliation against His believers, the unspeakably intense experience of finding the tomb empty and dialoguing with an angel all in the space of some 36 hours combined would be more than enough to inspire a little quiet time behind locked doors.

What they witnessed was a theophany, a revelation of God like Moses had on Sinai when he saw the burning bush and the Apostles Peter, James and John experienced on Mt. Tabor as Jesus was revealed to them in His glory. Every theophany comes with a commandment. For Moses it was to go and "set my people free." For the Apostles it was, "Do not tell anyone what you have seen." For the Myrrh-bearing Women it was to "go and tell." The difference being that in this case the theophany came in the form of a prophecy from an angel, "he is going before you into Galilee; there you will see him as he told you."

How do all of the subjects in these three episodes respond? Moses hesitates and makes excuses saying that he is a poor speaker and cannot handle the task. In the icons of the Transfiguration we see the three Apostles sprawled on the ground out of "fear and astonishment" and then, not knowing what to say in such a strange situation impetuous Peter utters some nonsense about building booths for Jesus, Moses and Elijah to sit in. The Myrrh-bearing Women flee in terror. Later, of course, all recover from their fear and do just as they were told and more.

It is so with us. When we first catch a glimpse of the glory of God we are not often ready to respond as we should. It may take a long time for the message to sink in and for the image of God within us to awaken to the Divine Presence. We are so used to ignoring His voice when at last it becomes clear that the Lord is actually speaking to us, we run away out of fear like Adam and Eve in Eden. But St. John tells us that we do not need to be afraid. He came not to condemn the world, but to save it. Often in Holy Scripture we read that people fall on their faces in fear when an angel appears. The message nearly always is "do not be afraid." Once Peter begs Jesus to depart from him because he is a sinful man. Again Jesus reaches out His hand to comfort the shaken fisherman. Clearly the Lord does not want us to live in dread of Him.

This quote from St. Dionysius the Areopagite sheds light on the just how overwhelmingly powerful Divine mercy is. Is it not true that Christ draws near with love to those who turn away from him? That he struggles with them, begs them not to scorn his love, and if they show only aversion and remain deaf to his appeals, becomes himself their advocate?

Even sinners need not be afraid! The message of the Gospel, of the life, death and resurrection of Christ is that God is love. He is the healer of wounds, the advocate for sinners, the corrector of the unjust, the lover of mankind, the one who stands at the door and knocks and knocks and knocks. If we turn away from Him, He draws closer. If we reject Him, He embraces us. If our hearts become harder, He searches infinitely for the inevitable crack through which to invade it. He woos us like a lover, cares for us like a mother, calls to us like a father and accompanies us like a brother. The unyielding love of honourable parents and faithful spouses is nothing in comparison to the love of God. The God who asks us to be patient is Himself the fountain of Patience. Although we are for now trapped in time the Lord's call echoes throughout eternity. We do not yet understand the extent of the victory that has been won by Jesus on the Cross and in the Empty Tomb. The spiritual life is a gradual journey into this greatest of mysteries.

The message of the Gospel is "do not be afraid." Go and proclaim that. Christ is risen!

Sermon by Fr. Antony Hughes